

Amendments to the Claims:

Claims 1-14 (Canceled)

15. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct comprising:
an elongated strip formed of an insulating material and a noncombustible sheet,
wherein said noncombustible sheet is disposed continuously about a circumference of said
insulating material so as to completely encase said insulating material when viewed in
longitudinal cross section;

wherein said elongated strip is arranged in a spiral shape having a plurality of
turns;

wherein adjacent turns of said plurality of turns of said spiral shape are secured
together by a bonding agent so as to form a tubular duct; and

wherein said tubular duct is noncombustible.

16. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 15,
wherein

 said bonding agent comprises a noncombustible bonding agent.

17. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 16,
wherein

 said insulating material comprises a noncombustible insulating fiber.

18. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 15,
wherein

 said insulating material comprises a noncombustible insulating fiber.

19. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 18,
wherein

 said noncombustible insulating fiber is glass wool.

20. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 18,
wherein

 said noncombustible insulating fiber is rock wool.

21. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 15,
wherein

 said elongated strip has a substantially rectangular cross section.

22. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct comprising:
 an elongated strip formed of an insulating material and a noncombustible sheet,
wherein said noncombustible sheet is disposed continuously about a circumference of said
insulating material so as to completely encase said insulating material when viewed in
longitudinal cross section;

 wherein said elongated strip is arranged in a spiral shape having a plurality of
turns;

 wherein adjacent turns of said plurality of turns of said spiral shape are secured
together by a noncombustible joint member so as to form a tubular duct; and

 wherein said tubular duct is noncombustible.

23. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22,
wherein

 said insulating material comprises a noncombustible insulating fiber.

24. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 23, wherein

said noncombustible insulating fiber is glass wool.

25. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 23, wherein

said noncombustible insulating fiber is rock wool.

26. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22, wherein

said elongated strip has a substantially rectangular cross section.

27. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22, wherein

said elongated strip has first and second opposite sides facing in opposing axial directions of said tubular duct, respectively, and inner and outer sides facing toward an interior of said tubular duct and an exterior of said tubular duct, respectively;

said elongated strip has flanges projecting from said first and second sides thereof, respectively; and

said noncombustible joint member is secured to said flanges of adjacent turns of said elongated strip to connect said flanges together, thereby connecting said turns together.

28. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 27, wherein

said flanges include axially-extending portions extending in axial directions of said tubular duct; and

said noncombustible joint member has opposing side edges that are folded-over said axially extending portions, respectively, of said flanges of the adjacent turns of said elongated strip.

29. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 28, wherein

 said elongated strip has a substantially rectangular cross section.

30. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 28, wherein

 said flanges project into the interior of said tubular duct, and said noncombustible joint member is disposed in the interior of said tubular duct.

31. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct comprising:
 an elongated strip formed of an insulating material and a noncombustible sheet, wherein said noncombustible sheet is disposed continuously about a circumference of said insulating material so as to completely encase said insulating material when viewed in longitudinal cross section;

 wherein said elongated strip is arranged in a spiral shape having a plurality of turns;

 wherein adjacent turns of said plurality of turns of said spiral shape are secured together by both a bonding agent and a noncombustible joint member so as to form a tubular duct; and

 wherein said tubular duct is noncombustible.

32. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein

said insulating material comprises a noncombustible insulating fiber.

33. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 32, wherein

 said noncombustible insulating fiber is glass wool.

34. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 32, wherein

 said noncombustible insulating fiber is rock wool.

35. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein

 said elongated strip has a substantially rectangular cross section.

36. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein

 said elongated strip has first and second opposite sides facing in opposing axial directions of said tubular duct, respectively, and inner and outer sides facing toward an interior of said tubular duct and an exterior of said tubular duct, respectively;

 said elongated strip has flanges projecting from said first and second sides thereof, respectively; and

 said noncombustible joint member is secured to said flanges of adjacent turns of said elongated strip to connect said flanges together, thereby connecting said turns together.

37. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 36, wherein

said flanges include axially-extending portions extending in axial directions of said tubular duct; and

 said noncombustible joint member has opposing side edges that are folded-over said axially extending portions, respectively, of said flanges of the adjacent turns of said elongated strip.

38. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 37, wherein

 said elongated strip has a substantially rectangular cross section.

39. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 37, wherein

 said bonding agent comprises a noncombustible bonding agent.

40. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein

 said bonding agent comprises a noncombustible bonding agent.

41. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein

 said elongated strip has flanges projecting from first and second sides thereof into an interior of said tubular duct, said noncombustible joint member is engaged with said flanges, and said flanges and said noncombustible joint member are disposed in the interior of said tubular duct.

42. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22, wherein

said elongated strip has flanges projecting from first and second sides thereof into an interior of said tubular duct, said noncombustible joint member is engaged with said flanges, and said flanges and said noncombustible joint member are disposed in the interior of said tubular duct.

Claim 43 (Canceled)

44. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein

 said noncombustible sheet is formed of a material selected from the group consisting of an aluminum glass cloth, aluminum foil, a nonflammably treated resin film, a glass cloth the pores of which have been filled and coated with silicon, a fire proof processed nonwoven cloth, a nonflammably treated mixed woven cloth, and a mica sheet.

45. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22, wherein

 said noncombustible sheet is formed of a material selected from the group consisting of an aluminum glass cloth, aluminum foil, a nonflammably treated resin film, a glass cloth the pores of which have been filled and coated with silicon, a fire proof processed nonwoven cloth, a nonflammably treated mixed woven cloth, and a mica sheet.

Claim 46 (Canceled)

47. **(Previously presented)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 15, wherein

 said noncombustible sheet is formed of a material selected from the group consisting of an aluminum glass cloth, aluminum foil, a nonflammably treated resin film, a glass

cloth the pores of which have been filled and coated with silicon, a fire proof processed nonwoven cloth, a nonflammable treated mixed woven cloth, and a mica sheet.

48. (New) A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 15, wherein said turns of said elongated strip are secured together in a side-by-side relationship by said bonding agent, with each adjacent pair of said turns having mutually adjacent sides that face each other along an axial direction of said tubular duct; and

for each said adjacent pair of said turns, said bonding agent is interposed between said mutually adjacent sides that face each other along said axial direction of said tubular duct, so as to secure said plurality of turns together to form said tubular duct.

49. (New) A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22, wherein said turns of said elongated strip are secured together in a side-by-side relationship by said bonding agent, with each adjacent pair of said turns having mutually adjacent sides that face each other along an axial direction of said tubular duct; and

said turns of said elongated strip further include respective inner surface sides that together form an inside tubular surface of said tubular duct;

for each said adjacent pair of said turns, each of said mutually adjacent sides, which face each other along said axial direction of said tubular duct, has an inwardly extending flange that respectively projects inwardly beyond said inner surface sides of said turns; and

said noncombustible joint member is constituted by a spiral member that is separate and discrete from said elongated strip and has a plurality of turns; and

said turns of said noncombustible joint member are respectively secured to adjacent pairs of said inwardly extending flanges of said elongated strip so as to secure said turns of said elongated strip together to form said tubular duct.

50. (New) A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein

said turns of said elongated strip are secured together in a side-by-side relationship by said bonding agent, with each adjacent pair of said turns having mutually adjacent sides that face each other along an axial direction of said tubular duct; and

 said turns of said elongated strip further include respective inner surface sides that together form an inside tubular surface of said tubular duct;

 for each said adjacent pair of said turns, each fo said mutually adjacent sides, which face each other along said axial direction of said tubular duct, has an inwardly extending flange that respectively project inwardly beyond said inner surface sides of said turns; and

 said noncombustible joint member is constituted by a spiral member that is separate and discrete from said elongated strip and has a plurality of turns;

 said turns of said noncombustible joint member are respectively secured to adjacent pairs of said inwardly extending flanges of said elongated strip so as to secure said turns of said elongated strip together to form said tubular duct; and

 for each said adjacent pair of said turns, said bonding agent is interposed between said mutually adjacent sides that face each other along said axial direction of said tubular duct, so as to secure said plurality of turns together to form said tubular duct.

51. (**New**) A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 15, wherein

 each of said turns is continuous with an adjacent one of said turns along a spiraling direction of said elongated strip, but is otherwise separate and discrete from said adjacent one of said turns.

52. (**New**) A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 22, wherein

 each of said turns is continuous with an adjacent one of said turns along a spiraling direction of said elongated strip, but is otherwise separate and discrete from said adjacent one of said turns.

53. **(New)** A noncombustible insulating duct according to claim 31, wherein each of said turns is continuous with an adjacent one of said turns along a spiraling direction of said elongated strip, but is otherwise separate and discrete from said adjacent one of said turns.